



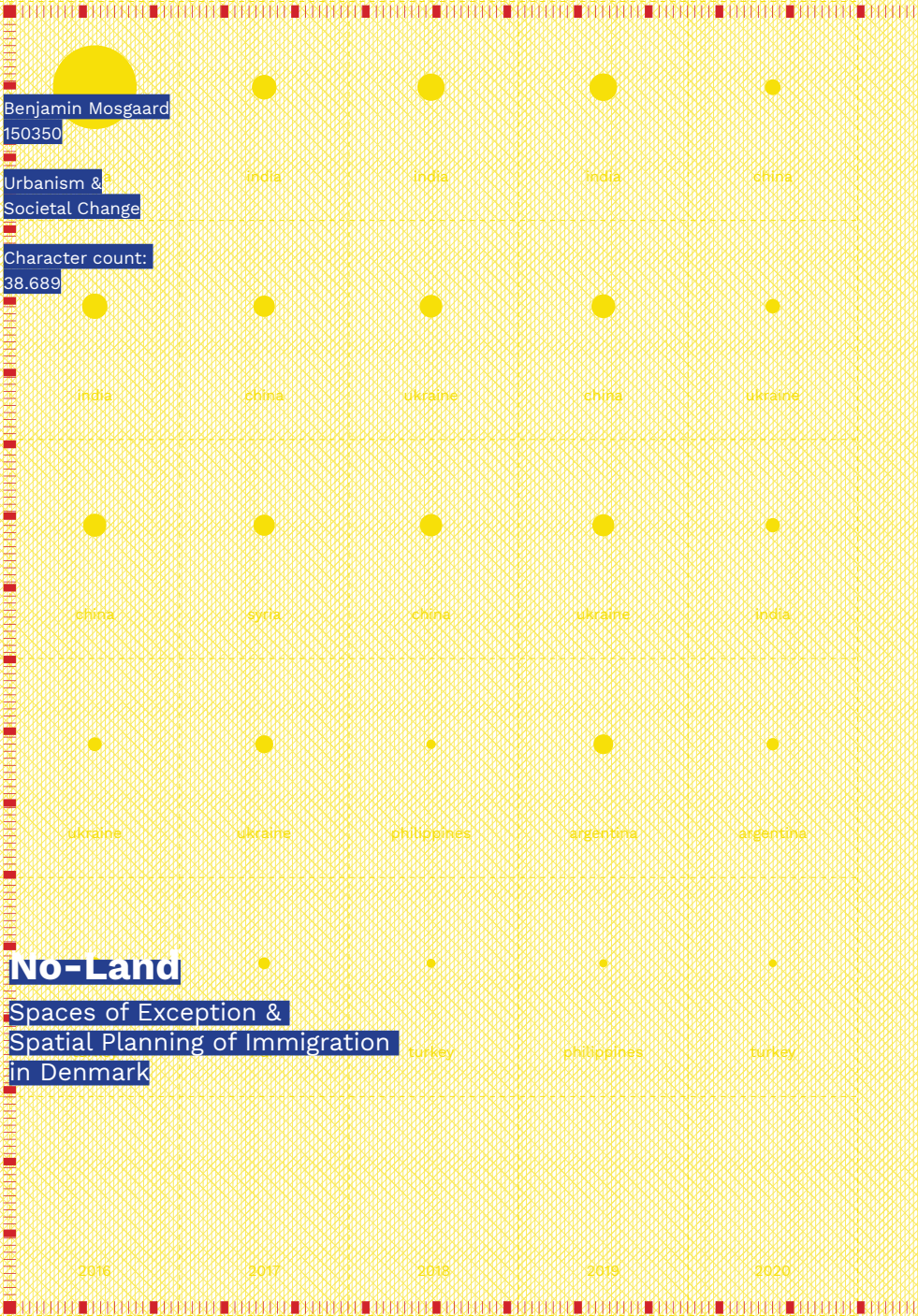
Royal Danish Academy

Architecture  
Design  
Conservation

Benjamin Mosgaard  
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Urbanism &  
Societal Change

Character count:  
38.689



**No-Land**

Spaces of Exception &  
Spatial Planning of Immigration  
in Denmark



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Paper to be read as a double spread.

<b>Table of Content</b>	
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>Timeline</b>	<b>06</b>
<b>Introduction/</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>Research Field</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>09</b>
<b>Method</b>	<b>09</b>
<b>Terminology</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Theory</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Case Studies</b>	<b>16</b>
Case 1: Danish Asylum Centre	16
Case 2: Story of Babishayini	26
Case 3: El Aaiún refugee camps, Algeria	34
<b>Discussion</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>48</b>

## Abstract

Within the thematic of the major displacement of humans across the world, the scene in this written thesis is set looking at how planning and spatial conditions are for the people migrating.

Narrowing it down to the circumstances of seeking asylum from points of view varying between the individual cases of seeking asylum and the systems of governmentality in a Danish context.

Widening it up with international perspectives of establishing an agency for the evicted people at their arrival destinations being either an asylum centre isolated from local communities or a refugee camp in the middle of West Saharan deserts.

The combination of knowledge of both qualitative, historical and societal matter this written thesis has drawn conclusions of the importance of involvement of architects and planners in the field of immigration being either spatial or with political identification of upholding the rights of asylum seekers.

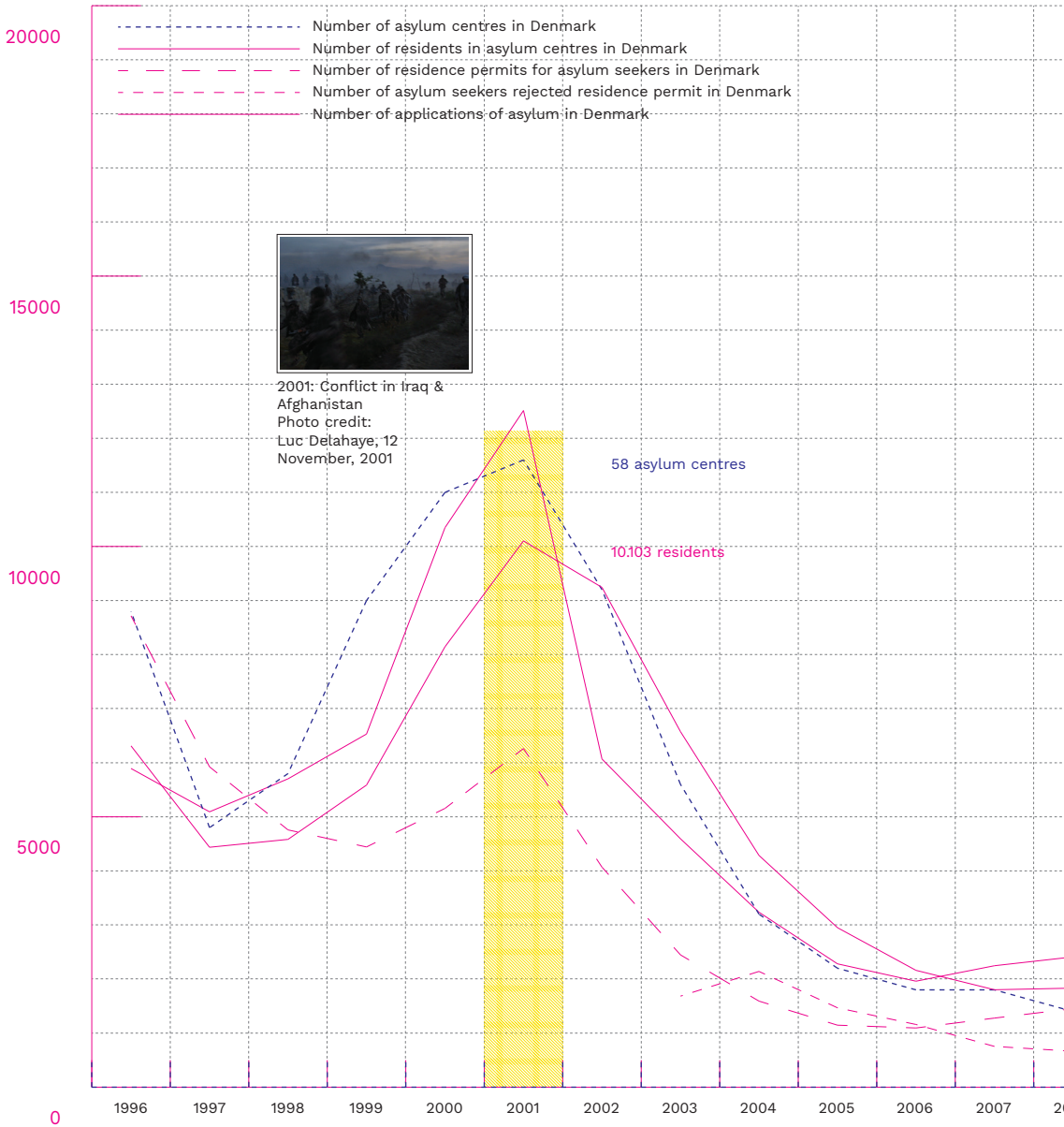
Timeline (next page spread):

The timeline as shown on the next spread of pages is an introduction to the context of the progress in more recent time (1996-2020) to the asylum seekers and the corresponding amount of asylum centres.

This overview is to visualize the correlation between the causes of the major periods of refugees arriving in Denmark and the responses in the planning of asylum centres in quantities.

Furthermore, it gives an overview of the accepted/rejected residence permits to point the potential result of seeking asylum.

# Timeline



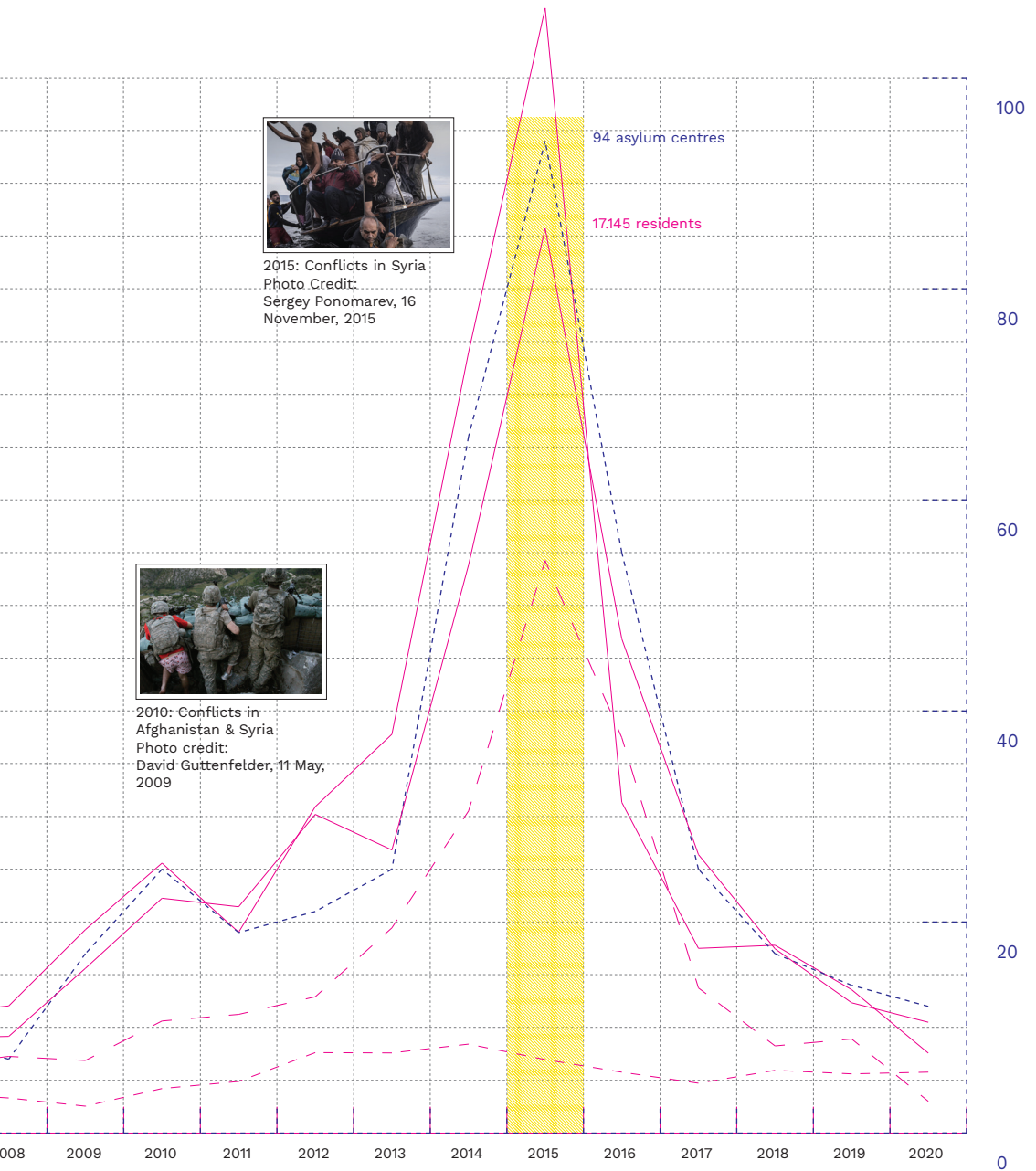


Fig. 1-1 Timeline of the Danish asylum system, 1996-2020. Credit: By author, data from Ministry of Immigration and Integration

## Introduction/ Research Field

With the extensive displacement of people due to internal or external conflicts, a so-called refugee crisis was on a worldwide spanning agenda in 2015, from politicians down to a conversation with a neighbour.

By looking at the terms of borders or boundaries this issue of migration is widened to include a crucial part of human history - by that to diversify the narratives of how the act of people moving could be looked at as more than a temporary crisis.

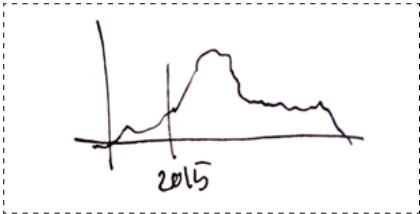


Fig. 1-2 A so-called "refugee crisis". Credit: By author

Looking into the official/governmental responses to migration, one way that societies have reacted is by establishing areas of temporary housing either close to or far from the respective contexts forcing people to migrate. These camps act as spaces of exception to migrant communities by leaving individual or collective human rights out of the equation. The establishments of camps are typically intended to be temporary solutions, but in several cases end up being a permanent state of living for many people.

This written thesis intends to look into the subject of so-called "No-Lands" with a focus on planning for immigration under circumstances of exception.

First in a local Danish context by looking at the conditions of asylum / deportation centres in Denmark through drawings, photographs, interviews, politics, etc., then investigating the topic of lower limits for life / housing quality and urban governance.

These spaces of exception are furthermore investigated through how temporary camps historically have been planned and how some of these camps over time become environments with urban conditions. A focus on how these dynamics change the camps spatially, as well as the right to the establishment of societal rights under these conditions.

A way of understanding the dynamics of being in a transition state as e.g. refugee communities are could be by comparing these local and global conditions for migration - looking at ways for architects, planners, individuals, politicians, etc. to gain an advanced agency under this topic through specific case studies.

The coming research questions of this written thesis seeks to open up a better understanding of these topics and ideas of migration.



## Research Questions

What are the spatial and societal consequences of state exception when looking into the temporary conditions of migration in a Danish context, as a journey of emergency, and present alternative solutions of spaces of exception?

How can spatial planning engage architects into the work of these spaces, and make room for an advanced agency for immigrants under circumstances of exception?

## Method

To investigate the research questions I have chosen to use three different methods to establish a historical, spatial, and societal context throughout my written thesis.

### Historical approach:

By setting the historical context since 1983 (new Immigration Act) of migration in Denmark as well as contexts of conflict, being either spatial through the physical development of refugee camps / asylum centres or the phenomenological precedents of housing of refugees. I will in this context examine the correlations between past and present conditions of being a migrant in a Danish context.

### Qualitative method:

With a qualitative approach to the written thesis, I seek to collect data (interviews, observations, drawings, etc.) focusing on the term “spaces of exception” to later conduct the knowledge

through analysis of the data and finally display it through visualizing the found correlations between the experienced and governed spatialities.

### Case Studies:

Through analysing different case studies being either international or Danish examples of handling refugees' cases in terms of spatial and social relations, I seek to broaden the view of specific issues or solutions concerning the experience of being an asylum seeker to clarify any connections between theoretical and practical reality of planning for refugees.

Through analyzing the case of El Aaiún refugee camp both spatially and historically I hope to learn about other kinds of processes around planning for migrants and elaborate on the terms of spaces of exception to further discuss the relevance of these approaches in a Danish context.

## Terminology

Through this written thesis, I will be using different terms around my topic, that could be interpreted as the same, but in the specific writing on this topic of migration, they differ as follow:

### Migration:

A person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons.<sup>1</sup>

### Immigration:

“From the perspective of the country of arrival, the act of moving into a country other than one’s country of nationality or usual residence, so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence.”<sup>2</sup>

### Emigration:

“From the perspective of the country of departure, the act of moving from one’s country of nationality or usual residence to another country, so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence.”<sup>3</sup>

### Migrant:

“The UN Migration Agency (IOM) defines a migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of

residence, regardless of (1) the person’s legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is.”<sup>4</sup>

### Refugee:

“A person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”<sup>5</sup>

### Exception:

Being outside of or excluded from ordinary/general orders or laws.

### No-Land:

A place categorized as being of exception from its surrounding context being either spatial, societal or cultural. Differs from the term “No-man’s-land” as this is defined by being “an area of unowned, unclaimed, or uninhabited land”<sup>6</sup>

4 <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/migration> [accessed 27.09.2021]

1 <https://www.iom.int/node/102743> [accessed 07.10.2021]

5 <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms> [accessed 27.09.2021]

2 <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms> [accessed 27.09.2021]

3 Ibid.

6 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/no-man%27s-land> [accessed 05.10.2021]

### Camp:

“a place with temporary accommodation of huts, tents, or other structures, typically used by soldiers, refugees, or travelling people”<sup>7</sup>

7 Oxford Languages

8 (Agamben, 1998)

### Zoe / Bios:<sup>8</sup>

Zoe: the biological fact of being alive; i.e. reproduction and subsistence - bare life.

Bios: a cultural/political way of life, able to establish relations with others.

## Theory

9 (Agamben, 2005)

I have chosen to focus my written thesis on three main theories in the matter of analysing the displacement of people as an overall thematic. One is concerning the state of exception, pointing to the state of the migrant. Another is focused on the act of governance from being either governing or governed, which is the theory of biopolitics and biopower. Finally, to elaborate on the spatial analysis of the contexts around migration I will analyse campscapes as a universal tool across diverse geographic locations.

10 Ibid.

### State of Exception:

The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben introduces the term “state of exception” in his book of the same title<sup>9</sup>. He describes the initially temporary condition human beings could be situated in during times of emergency. Being in a state of exception means to exist outside of juridical orders.

With this, I will investigate the state of the immigrant being either in a Danish context of an asylum centre or the dynamics of refugee camps that end up being long term solutions to temporary issues.

Connected to the state of exception is the sovereign, as Carl Schmitt, a German jurist and political theorist, describes it - “he who decides the state of exception”<sup>10</sup>. This refers to the relations of power between the governing and the one of exception - in this paper the top-down planning and the individual migrants.

**Biopower:**

Looking into the concept of governing large groups of people, social theorist Michel Foucault stated in his publication “The Birth of Biopolitics” (1978), that within governing a certain kind of power is present. This is what Foucault calls “biopower” which is the technology of power for managing human bodies that refers to what is called biopolitics that is embedded within our societal institutions.<sup>1</sup>

This could be seen in the power relationship that exists in a capitalistic approach of political leaders, to manage people into a system that is heavily economically dependent.

“What we are dealing with in this new technology of power is not exactly society (or at least not the social body, as defined by the jurists), nor is it the individual body. It is a new body, a multiple body, a body with so many heads that, while they might not be infinite in number, cannot necessarily be counted. Biopolitics deals with the population, with the population as a political problem, as a problem that is at once scientific and political, as a biological problem and as power’s problem.”<sup>2</sup>

With this Foucault points to the justification of power over people for the sake of maintaining security in a society - in the case of migration, security of not losing power over a system not suited for foreign life - as a threat to national community and space.<sup>3</sup>

“It is the power to ‘make’ live and ‘let’ die. The right of sovereignty was the right to take life or let live. And then this new right is established: the right to make live and to let die.”<sup>4</sup>

4 (Foucault, 2003, pp 240-241)

**Campscapes:**

Professor Diana Martin, PhD of the University of Portsmouth, states through her article on spaces of exception<sup>5</sup> that the spatial qualities of refugee camps that have existed over longer periods, change into scaped-like areas - describing the camps as interconnected areas of different people’s interests and way of living.

5 (Martin, 2015)

1 (Foucault and Senellart, 2008)

The term “camp” is according to Agamben connected to exception as he describes it:

“The camp is the space that opens up when the state of exception starts to become the rule”<sup>6</sup>

6 (Agamben, 2000)

“[t]he suffix -scape allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes [...] These terms with the common suffix -scape also indicate that these are not objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision but, rather, that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation-states, multinationals, diasporic communities, as well as subnational groupings and movements (whether religious, political, or economic), and even intimate face-to-face groups, such as villages, neighbourhoods, and families.”<sup>7</sup>

2 (Foucault, 2003, pp 245)

3 (Martin, 2015, pp 11)

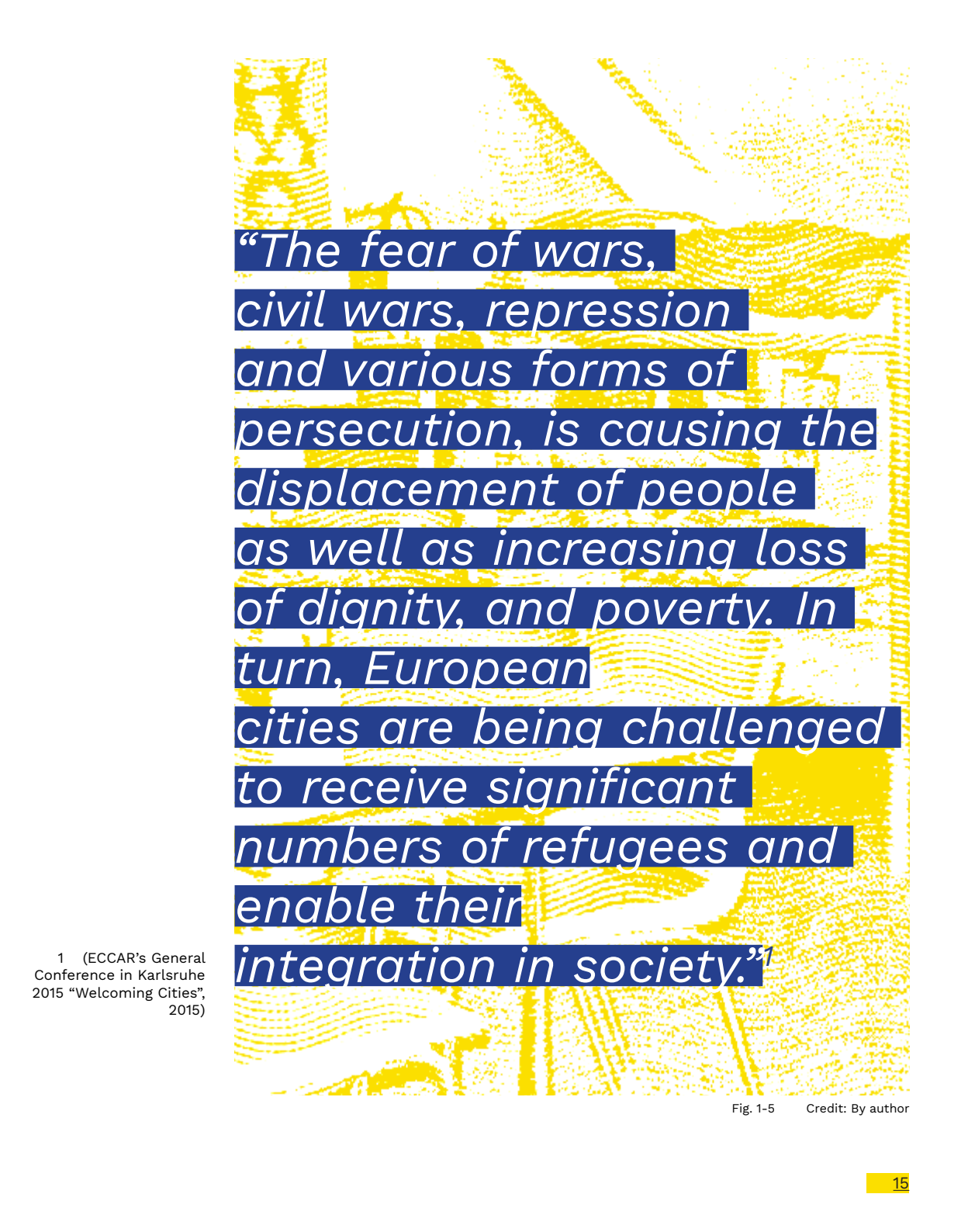
7 (Martin, 2015, pp 13-14)



Fig. 1-3 Credit: Jacob Lawrence, "A Photographer", 1942



Fig. 1-4 Room at Asylum centre, Middelfart. Credit: (Juhl, 2004, pp 39)



*“The fear of wars, civil wars, repression and various forms of persecution, is causing the displacement of people as well as increasing loss of dignity, and poverty. In turn, European cities are being challenged to receive significant numbers of refugees and enable their integration in society.”<sup>1</sup>*

1 (ECCAR's General Conference in Karlsruhe 2015 "Welcoming Cities", 2015)

Fig. 1-5 Credit: By author

To open up the thematics of this written thesis, I decided to highlight three cases that concern spaces of exception. The first is focusing on the Danish asylum system and the asylum centres as a physical manifest thereof. The second is a specific experience with being a refugee arriving in Denmark and how time and space are important factors as an individual being. Then ending with the case of El Aaiún refugee camps in West Sahara and Algeria, that sets a perspective of how refugee camps potentially evolve from temporary to permanent phenomena. Through this, I seek to analyse multiple sides of displacement from structural issues over human narratives to spatial perspectives, as well as opening up a discussion of how and when the profession of architects should start to intervene/act within this field.

### Case 1: Danish Asylum Centre

#### System structures & authorities:

As a beginning to get an overview of the Danish asylum system it is important to define how refugees are handled from a governmental point of view throughout the asylum process.

At the point of arrival to Denmark, not being a Danish citizen, several circumstances decide one's possibilities to stay in the country. You have a valid reason to stay in Denmark if you are...<sup>1</sup>

- 1) a Nordic citizen (Finland, Iceland, Norway or Sweden)
- 2) a foreigner who wishes to work or study, as well as accompanying family of this foreigner
- 3) an European Union citizen, EEA<sup>2</sup> national or Swiss national and their family members covered by the rules on the free movement
- 4) a foreigner with close family in Denmark (family reunification)
- 5) a foreigner in need of international protection (asylum and humanitarian residence)
- 6) a foreigner with a need for entering and staying in Denmark for up to 90 days (visa or visa-free stay)

1 (Tal og Fakta på Udlændingeområdet, 2020)

2 EEA includes EU countries + Iceland, Liechtenstein & Norway



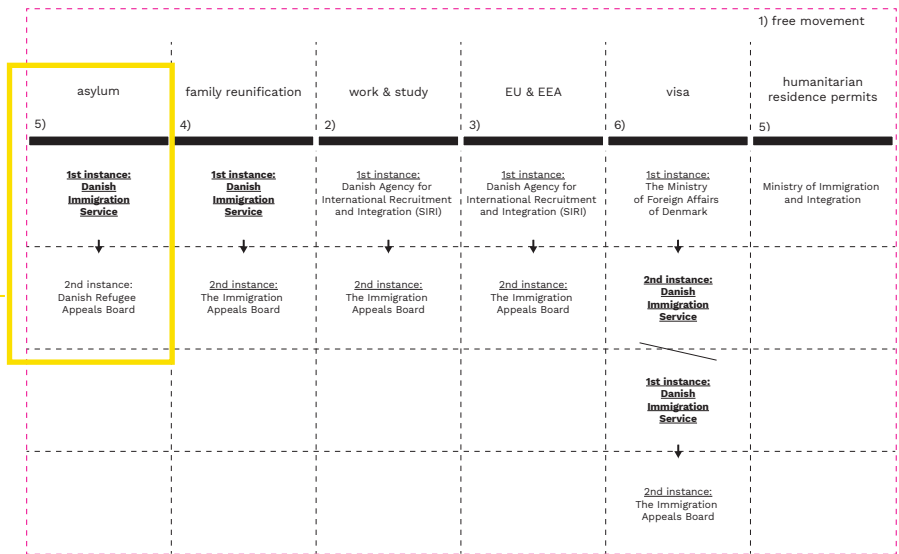


Fig. 1-6 Which authorities handle which case? Credit: By author + data from (Tal og fakta på udlændingeområdet, 2020)

category	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	% 2020
asylum	7.493	2.750	1.652	1.783	701	1 %
family reunification	8.149	7.790	5.234	3.648	4.529	8 %
business	12.903	12.749	14.355	14.974	11.576	20 %
study	14.247	15.260	15.725	16.716	9.408	16 %
EU/EEA	37166	38.237	39.079	36.865	31.812	55 %
total	79.958	76.786	76.045	73.986	57.926	100 %

Fig. 1-7 The statistics of applying for a residence permit from 2016-2020. Credit: By author + data from (Tal og fakta på udlændingeområdet, 2020)

In the case of which authorities handles which cases, the migration system consists of 6 different divisions. (Fig. 1-6)

Although there is a general decrease in residence permit applications<sup>3</sup>, this table shows that the case of asylum seekers has been a minor factor in the matter of quantities of migration. (Fig. 1-7)

As a result of this in relation to the introduced issues around the topic, I will investigate conditions for asylum seekers in Denmark to open up a discussion of the experiencing of spaces of exception about planning for these types of spaces.

3 This being significant from 2019 to 2020 due to less mobility across borders because of the Covid19 situation

A political demand & humanitarian work:

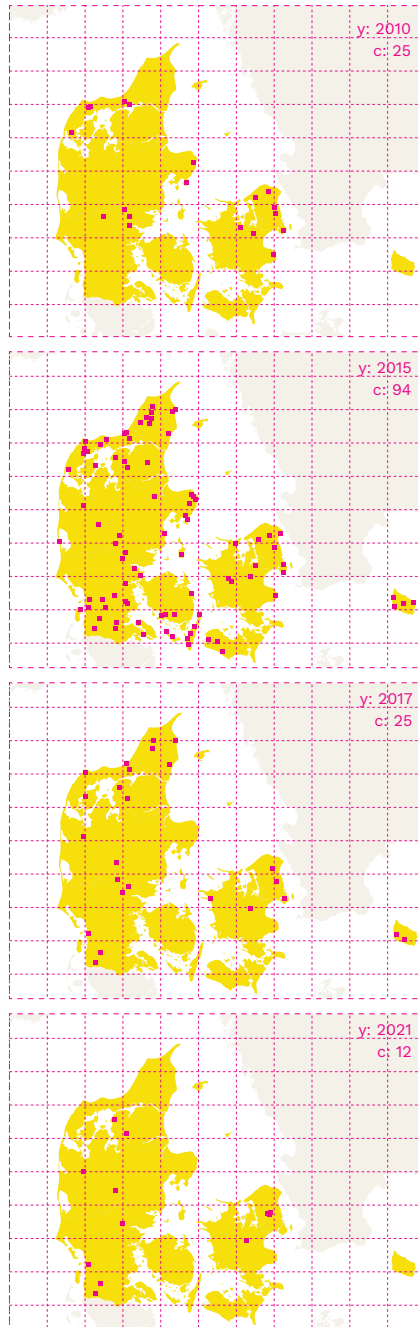
The history of migration in a Danish context points to the history of handling immigrants through the establishment of asylum centres, etc. From having around 160 asylum centres<sup>1</sup> in Denmark back in 1992 due to refugees coming from the area around Balkan to the present situation of 12 asylum centres in total.

With today's conditions of the risk of few vacant spots<sup>2</sup> for asylum seekers in Denmark due to an increase of people migrating from conflicts especially in the case of the present situation in Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup>

*"The asylum system is like an accordion. It must be ready to unfold quickly, but also to be able to contract again in no time. That way, it is an extremely hard area to work with because it can always go up and down very quickly."*<sup>4</sup>

These changes of displacement demand spatial handling of people seeking to live in a safe environment, which surpasses the present capacity of spots for asylum seekers as of how the Danish government handles the situation of immigration and integration.

In the Danish asylum system, many of the asylum centres are managed by the humanitarian aid organisation Red Cross Denmark.<sup>5</sup>



1 (Stilling Pedersen, 2015, pp 36)

2 An estimated number drawn from the current capacity + the number of people emigrated from Afghanistan to Denmark (August 2021)

3 (<https://www.rodekors.dk/node/2285>) [accessed 07.10.2021]

4 (<https://www.information.dk/moti/2018/08/knap-tre-aar-siden-98-asylcentre-18>) [accessed 07.10.2021]

5 The rest are handled by particular municipalities.

Fig. 1-8 Placement of asylum centres in Denmark over time. y = year, c = centres. Credit: By author

When the demand for spots for asylum seekers in asylum centres increases, Red Cross Denmark seeks out places like hotels, holiday inns, folk high schools, etc. to accommodate asylum seekers.

The Danish Immigration Service has a lease contract with Red Cross Denmark for the buildings used for accommodation, teaching, activation, etc. of residents (incl. asylum seekers).

The Danish Immigration Service has contact and contractual relationship with the landlord.<sup>6</sup>

6 ("1-Naar-Roede-Kors-Rykker.pdf")

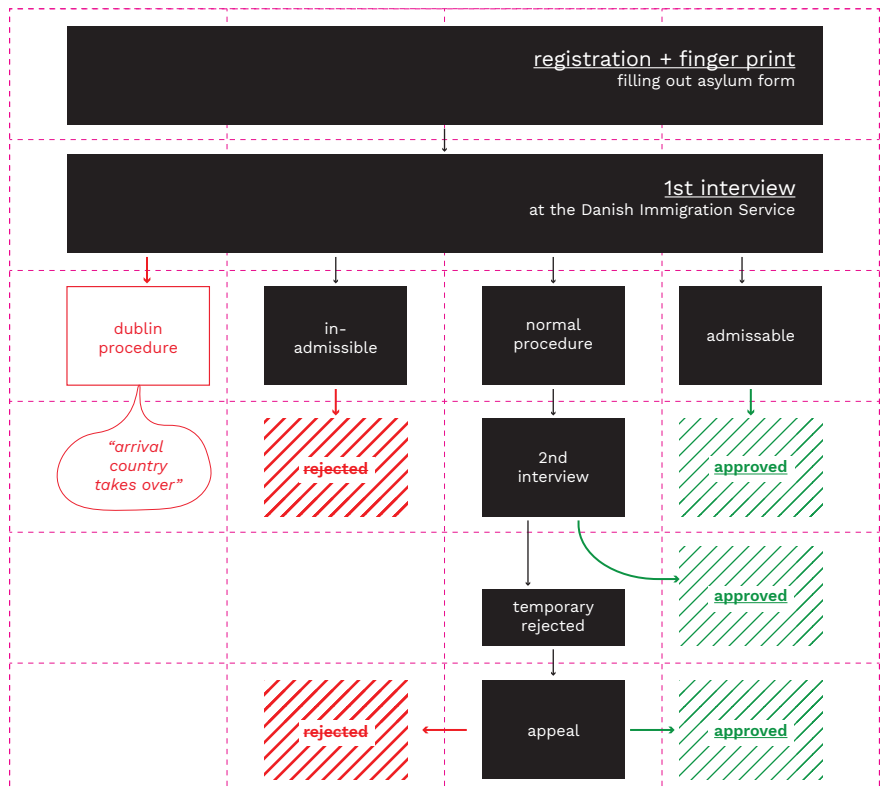


Fig. 1-9 Steps of the asylum process in Denmark. Credit: By author

## Between organizational levels and residents:

Here I'll be analysing Red Cross Denmark as an organization and their role in the asylum debate and comparing it to statements of people that are or have been through the Danish asylum system describing their experiences of being a resident at an asylum centre.

Red Cross Denmark stated in 2010 in a publication around facts of their work with asylum in Denmark, how they facilitate the living conditions for asylum seekers in the Danish asylum centres. These statements are mainly focused around the physical conditions, such as "most have their own bath and kitchen", "families have since 2007 been offered at least two rooms with a total of up to 47 square metres" or "singles live no more than four people in one room".<sup>1</sup>

With a focus on the help being mostly in how the physical context is in the case of an asylum seeker, questions around mental health issues are suppressed.

A former resident at the asylum centre Sandholm points to the experience of still being forced to go back for systematic visits such as a visit to the doctor at the centre as:

*"Now I only go to Sandholm to get to the doctor and to pick up pocket money. This means that I am not constantly reminded that I am an asylum seeker."*<sup>2</sup>

Being reminded as an asylum seeker is an issue that points to the mental consequences of these places of exception that asylum centres possibly could be

viewed as. This point of view is later to be elaborated in this written thesis.

Due to a revised agreement called "the annex model" chosen asylum seekers (Fig. 1-10) are given a possibility to live outside asylum centres during the management of the asylum seeking procedure. Despite this model, the conflict between the physical and mental circumstances of asylum seekers are still present:

*"When we think about the fact that we are still not allowed to work, and that we still can not decide on our future ourselves... it feels like being a bird in a gold cage... it is a beautiful cage, but it does not make us freer"*<sup>3</sup>

This could point to the further issues with the effects of the biopower/biopolitics that refugees are undermined by state governance during their asylum case management. The idea of aid from a societal point of view (zoe) ends up neglecting a qualified life (bios).<sup>4</sup>

As a child in the Danish asylum centre, the waiting time brings extensive uncertainty regarding future possibilities. The waiting time is either the fact of *being* in the present or as a future-oriented *becoming* through phases of development into being an adult.<sup>5</sup>

There is a risk in, that part of *becoming* potentially is undefined for the individual and could lead to a direct negative effect in the matter of being in the time-frame of one's asylum process.

3 ("9-Herre-i-egethus-PDH-.pdf")

1 ("2-Fakta-Om-asylarbejdet-revideret-2010.pdf")  
4 (Agamben, 2000)

5 (Vitus and Smith Nielsen 2011, pp 100)

2 ("2-Fakta-Om-asylarbejdet-revideret-2010.pdf")

42L-(1) The Immigration Service must decide upon application that an alien who has submitted an application for a residence permit under section 7 may stay in private accommodation until the alien is granted a residence permit, departs or is returned from Denmark, provided that –

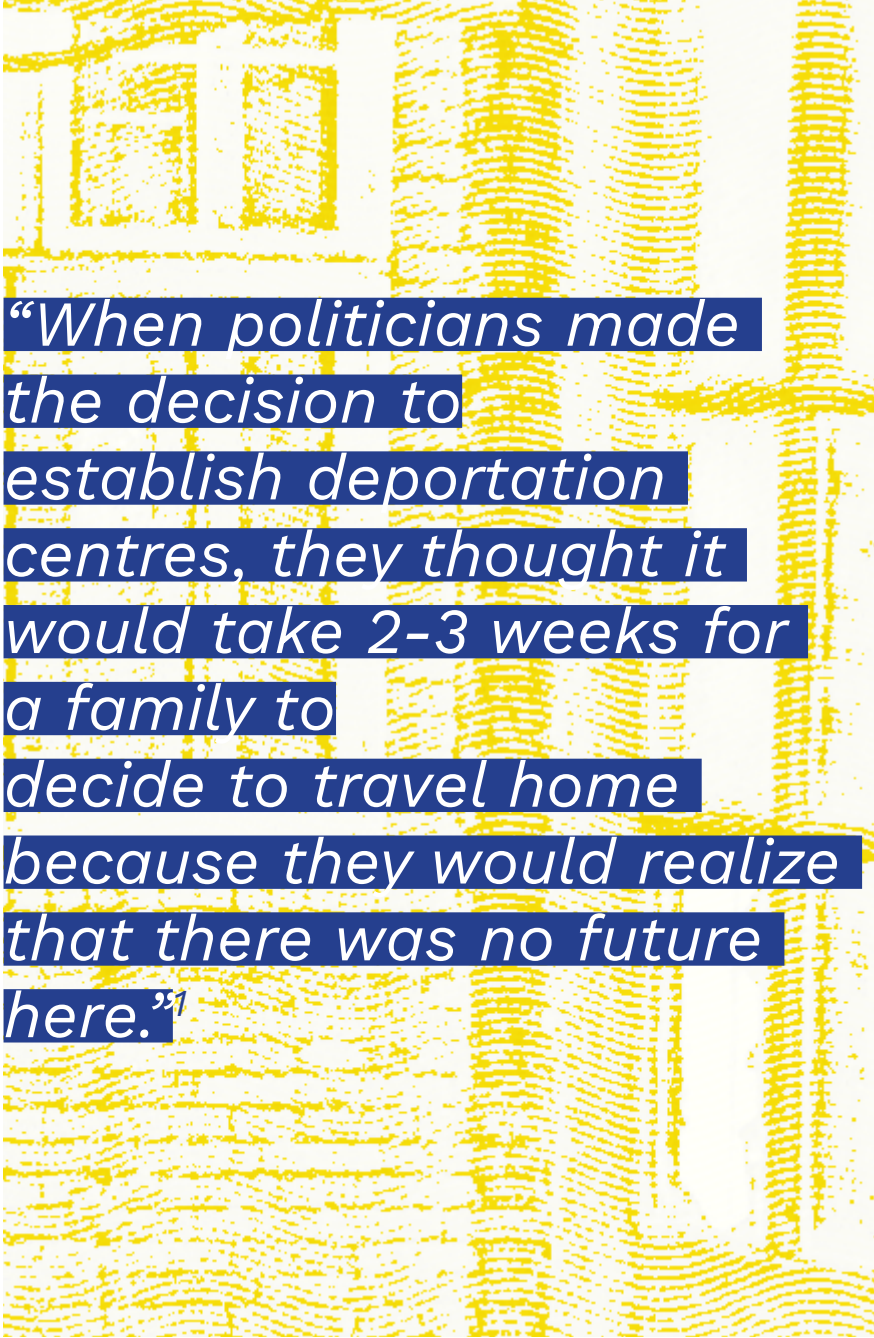
- 1) The alien has stayed in Denmark for at least six months from his submission of an application for a residence permit under section 7;
  - 2) The Immigration Service has decided that the alien may stay in Denmark during the asylum proceedings, see in this respect section 48e(2); and
  - 3) The alien concludes a contract with the Immigration Service in accordance with subsection (4).
- (2) Subsection (1) does not apply to –
- 1) Aliens who have been expelled by an administrative decision according to section 25;
  - 2) Aliens who have been expelled by judgment;
  - 3) Aliens who have been sentenced to a suspended or unsuspended custodial sentence or another criminal sanction that involves or allows the possibility of detention for an offence committed in Denmark that would have led to a penalty of this character;
  - 4) Aliens whose residence permit has been terminated according to section 21b(1);
  - 5) Aliens who are subject to the exclusion criteria of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (28 July 1951); and
  - 6) Aliens whose application for a residence permit under section 7 is processed under section 53b.

Fig. 1-10 Aliens (Consolidation) Act (No. 239 of 10 March 2019). Credit: Ministry of Immigration and Integration

In the next case study I will look further into the specific experience of being the governed in relation to the Danish asylum system. This I do to potentially get an idea of both spatial and social implications on an individual level in terms of space and time.



Fig. 1-11 Emergency exit, Randers Barracks. Credit: (Juhl, 2004, pp 23)



*“When politicians made the decision to establish deportation centres, they thought it would take 2-3 weeks for a family to decide to travel home because they would realize that there was no future here.”<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> - Red Cross, interview in AdMiGov, Kalir et al. 2021 (B) “a-firm-hand\_web.pdf”, pp 35

Fig. 1-12 Credit: By author







Fig. 1-13 Geographic overview of areas of interest in case studies 2 & 3. Credit: By author

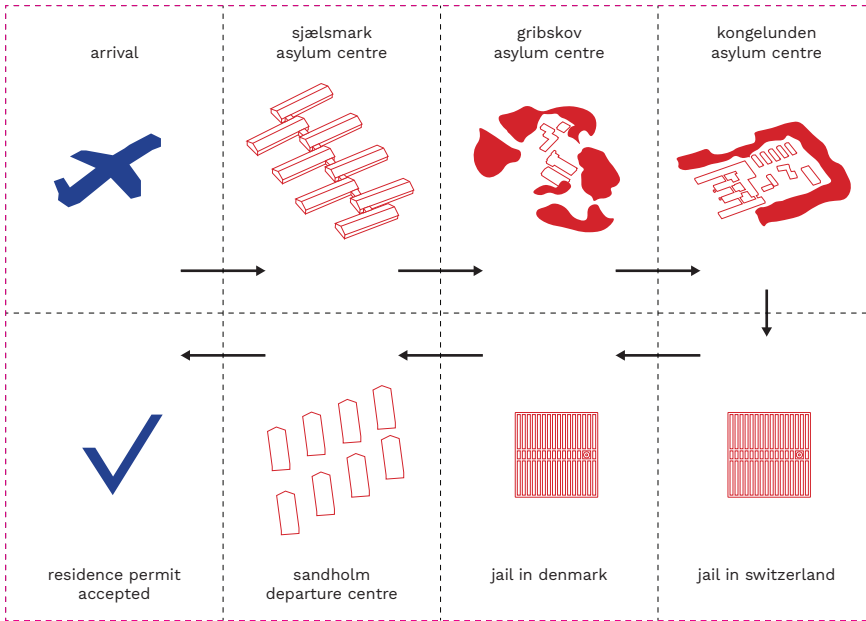


Fig. 1-14 Step by step diagram of typologies along Babishayini's asylum process. Credit: By author

## Case 2: Story of Babishayini

This case study will focus on the story of a 16-year-old girl, Babishayini, migrating from Sri Lanka due to conflicts<sup>1</sup> and fear for her own safety / life.

She told the story at the age of 24 through the platform of “Fortællinger på Flugt”<sup>2</sup> a podcast giving young immigrants a possibility to tell their own story of trying to achieve asylum in Denmark.<sup>3</sup>

The structure of the analysis of this case is a combination of transcribed sections from Babishayini's statements, highlights of time and spatial factors through text as well as images from the specific spaces along with her story.

These images are furthermore analysed with highlights of spatial designations. This is to set focus on the **time** and **space** aspects of the story of a refugee.

1 Sri Lankan Civil War

2 “Fortællinger på Flugt” translates into “Refugee Tales”

3 (“Fortællinger på Flugt”, 2018)



Fig. 1-15 Entrance of Sjælsmark Asylum Centre; former military camp. Credit: Google Street View + by author

First experience of living in **Denmark**:

**8 months** of migrating from **Sri Lanka to Denmark**.

First day at asylum centre (**Sjælsmark**) as a minor refugee (**16 years old**).

Babishayini:

*“... I’m sitting in my room without knowing anything, I didn’t even know what a duvet was. the only thing that drove around in my brain was: where my family was, and the thought of my family, and the thought of the homeland, and why I am here in **Denmark**.”<sup>4</sup>*

**3 months** at **Sjælsmark**.

4 Ibid.

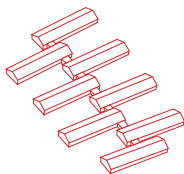




Fig. 1-16 Entrance to Gribskov asylum centre, at the end of a long narrow road surrounded by trees. Credit: Google Street View + by author

Moved to **Gribskov** asylum centre.

Life starts: gets friends, starts learning the Danish language, going to school, being active.

**After 6 months** invited to talk to the Immigration Office:

"Why are you in **Denmark**? Why did you come to **Denmark**? What problems were present in your home country? What are you going to do in **Denmark** in the **future**?<sup>1</sup>

Babishayini:

"I did not know why I was called in for an interview. I was afraid of why they had called me for an interview. If they would send me **back to Sri Lanka** now."<sup>2</sup>

**5-6 hours** of conversation.

**Around 3 weeks of waiting time** to get clearance about getting a residence permit.

Rejected, they didn't believe her case.

Babishayini:

"it did not disappoint me at first, as I did not know about the system - but I continued to be active and study"<sup>3</sup>

3 Ibid.

**After 1 year** the Refugee Board wanted to hear her story once again.

Three persons interrogate her and will decide her future **the same day**.

Rejected once again.

1 ("Fortællinger på Flugt", 2018)

Babishayini:

"...it's like they've decided my life, my **future** in **5 minutes**..."<sup>4</sup>

4 Ibid.

2 Ibid.



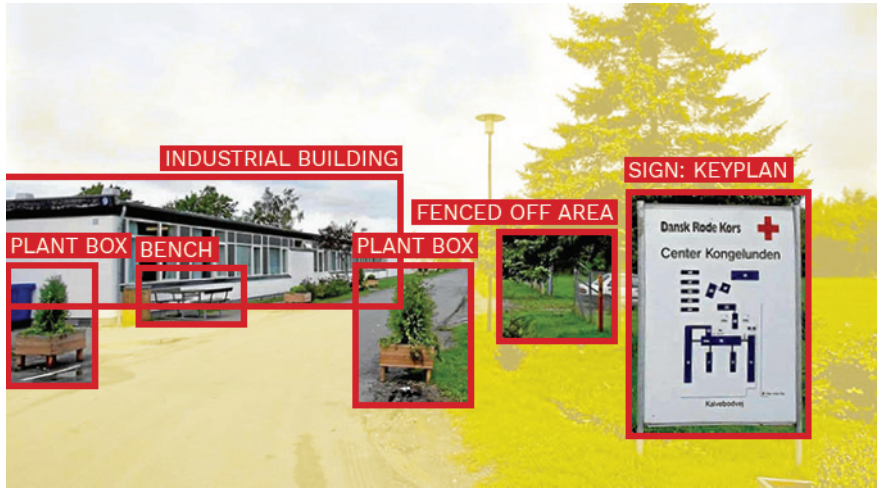


Fig. 1-17 Entrance to the former Kongelunden asylum centre. Credit: Google Street View + by author

Turning 18 years old she is moved from an asylum centre for minors to an adult asylum centre (Kongelunden Asylum Centre).

She is treated differently at the adult asylum centre, and one has to manage everything themselves.

Babishayini:

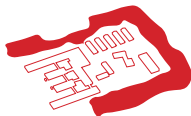
*"... I was not aware that you had to do everything yourself when you turned 18..."<sup>5</sup>*

Difficult because she was the only young woman among other adults.

After 2 years at Kongelunden, she receives a letter that she has to go back to Sri Lanka and they'll book a flight ticket for her.

Her only choice (her words) was to migrate further to Switzerland because she was afraid that Denmark would send her back to Sri Lanka.

5 Ibid.



## Switzerland:

Because of the "Dublin Regulation", she was not allowed to seek asylum in more than one country (she didn't know about this).

She was arrested and sent to **jail**.

Babishayini:

*"I will never forget those days."*

After 1 month in **jail in Switzerland**, they send her **back to Denmark**.

1 ("Fortællinger på Flugt", 2018)

At **CPH airport** she was arrested because she migrated illegally from **Denmark**.

Sent to **jail in Denmark**, being alone and thinking about the **future**.

She has to participate voluntarily **with the Danish police to fly back to Sri Lanka**, if not she will be forced to leave. In the **meantime**, she has to **stay in jail** and receive no "pocket money".<sup>2</sup>

2 Basic benefit (state funded) as an asylum seeker is 54,47 DKK pr. day.  
<https://www.nyidanmark.dk/da/Waiting/Asylum/Conditions%20for%20asylum%20seekers> [accessed 25.11.2021]





Fig. 1-18 Entrance at Sandholm asylum centre. Credit: Google Street View + by author

After participating voluntarily she is released from jail and has to stay at Sandholm Departure Centre until they arrange the flight to Sri Lanka.

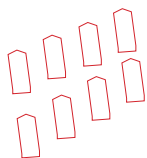
After 5 years at Sandholm, she is asked for an interview with the Immigration Office once again.

5 years of not being deported from Denmark.

During the interview, she is offered an interpreter but she just speaks Danish, as she has learned that during her stay in Denmark.

3 weeks of answering time.

Accepted residence permit because they were impressed with her Danish language skills.



In the last case study I will elaborate on alternatives to governmentality of immigration, through the context of a refugee camp situated in close contact to the area being emigrated from, as well as having existed for almost a half century.

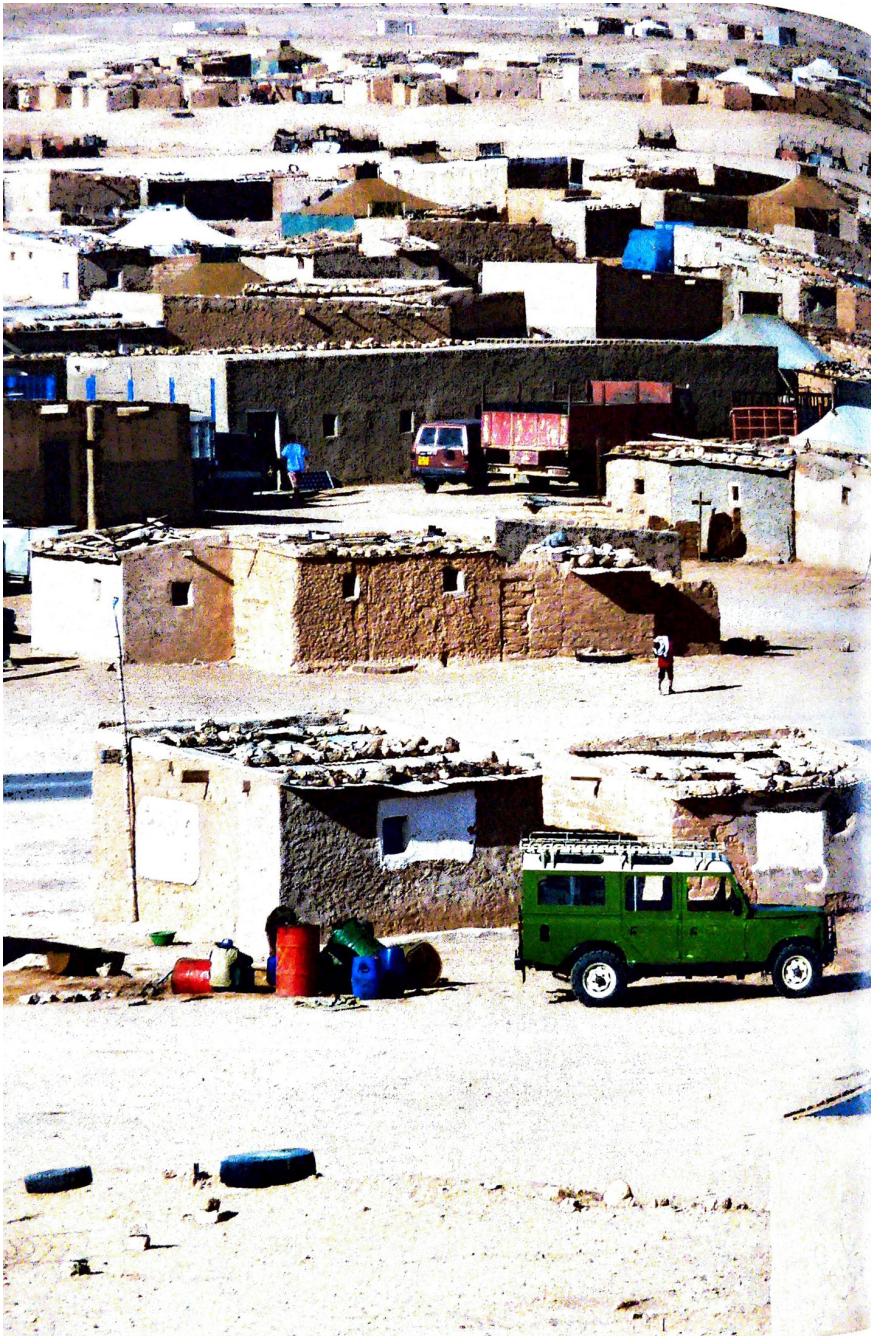
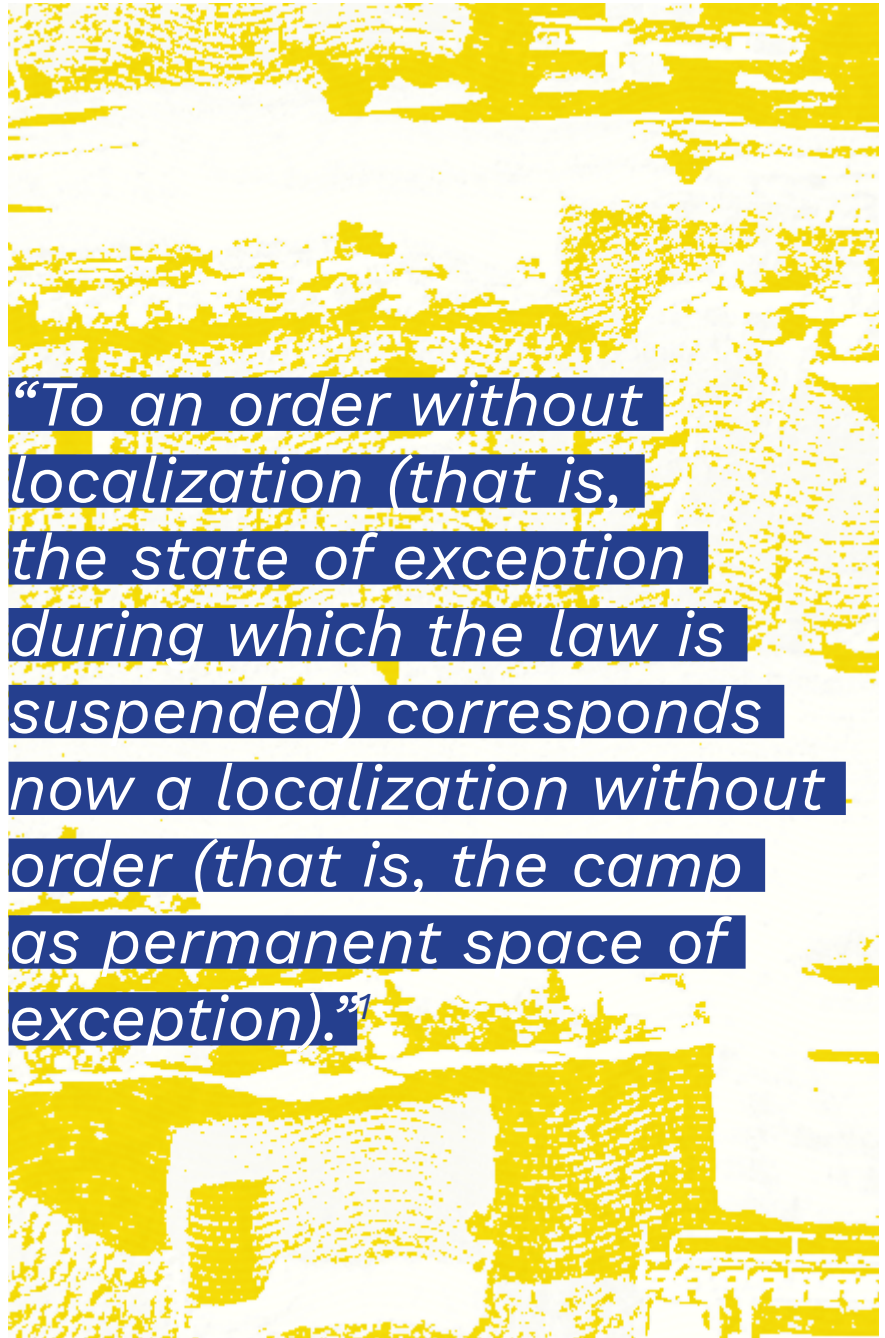


Fig. 1-19 Overlooking daïra (district) El Guelta in El Aaiún. Credit: (Herz, 2013, pp 22-23)





*“To an order without localization (that is, the state of exception during which the law is suspended) corresponds now a localization without order (that is, the camp as permanent space of exception).”<sup>1</sup>*

1 (Agamben, 2000, pp 41,2)

Fig. 1-20 Credit: By author

### Case 3: El Aaiún refugee camps, Algeria

In addition to the Danish system of planning asylum centres according to political demand, I here seek to analyse the case of El Aaiún refugee camps established in the '70s due to conflicts<sup>1</sup> in West Sahara inhabited by the Sahrawi people<sup>2</sup>.

These informal settlements are an examples of refugee camps that has transitioned from being a temporary solution to a permanent city. The camp is an example of not being planned by the UNHCR as most camps are today, but instead from within the camp's informal dynamics of being a growing community on the run.<sup>3</sup>

#### Planning of Land:

*“Land in the refugee camps cannot be bought. It has no monetary value and cannot be privately owned. [...] The Sahrawis’ stay in refugee camps went hand in hand with the idea of reducing the differences and hierarchies within Sahrawi Society. As an additional benefit, the fact that land cannot be owned and carries no monetary values removes one of the main factors for social and economic difference from the refugee community.”<sup>4</sup>*

*“The uniform rows of tents are dissolved and a more “organic” fabric starts to emerge. Families try to stay close to each other when children marry and move out. Initially in just single huts, over time families start to build additional structures. More recently, these structures are surrounded by walls to create enclosed compounds separating private and public space.”<sup>5</sup>*

1 The West Sahara conflict between POLISARIO and Spanish colonial forces (1973-75) as well as the West Sahara War (1975-91)

2 Nomadic people from the western part of Sahara.

4 (Herz, 2013, 140)

3 (Herz, 2013)

5 (Herz, 2013, 96)



Fig. 1-21 Diagram of urban fabric development. Credit: (Herz, 2013, pp 96)

6 (Herz, 2013)

### Typologies & Construction Process:

Throughout the El Aaiún camps, different building typologies appear. These range from light structured types of tents (“khayma”) with a temporary appearance to more permanent solutions as cement plastered adobe houses built of clay bricks (adobe).

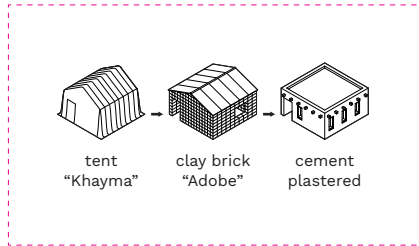


Fig. 1-22 Housing typologies. Credit: By author

As the temporary materials such as textile and light structures of metal framing often are provided by the Algerian government, the adobe houses are hand-crafted by the residents of the camps.

7 (Herz, 2013)

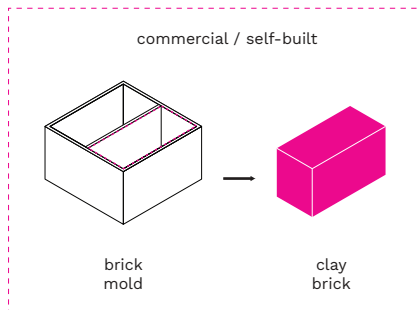


Fig. 1-23 Hand-made bricks in metal molds. Credit: By Author

The usual way of constructing permanent structures in these camps is with the use of clay bricks. These clay bricks are either created commercially at centralized areas in the camps with a bigger capacity of production or as self-

built decentralized areas often right at the construction site of the building.<sup>6</sup> The commercial crafted building materials leads to possibilities of starting up business’ and by that an advanced agency along with a state of exception.

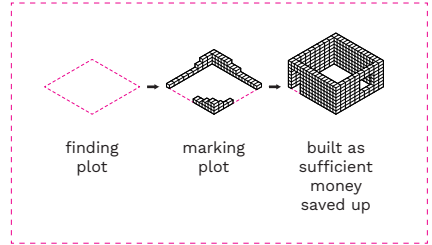


Fig. 1-24 Expansion of housing units. Credit: By author.

Finding a plot for construction is usually situated next to each housing unit, and marked with clay bricks for future construction of the completed building - the time aspect of construction is defined by each family unit’s prospect of having the sufficient money.<sup>7</sup> The possibility of expanding one family’s area of living creates a sense of agency to settle for a more permanent future and ownership through everyday living.

Sense of ownership:

In the process of advancing one's living conditions into a more permanent state, the residents start to upgrade their residential spaces.

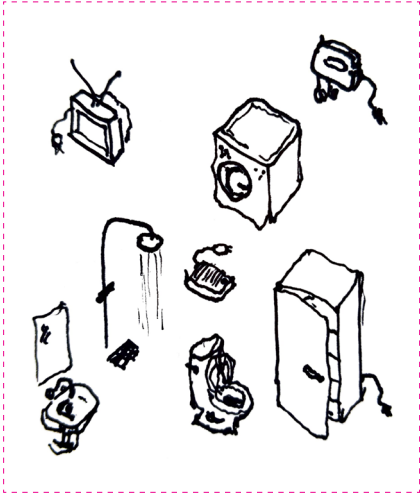


Fig. 1-27 Interior furnishing. Credit: By author

This could be done through the construction of additional units or investment in interior furnishing, decoration and equipment, creating a sense of ownership within one's private boundaries. These boundaries are further established usually through the enclosure of each compound of family units, resulting in a notion of privacy and security. (Fig. 1-25)



Fig. 1-26 Decorating interior spaces. Credit: (Herz, 2013, pp 149)

*“After living for years in the desert, with limited resources, few natural colors or plants, and a ruthless climate, the strive for a more bucolic and idyllic setting seems only too natural”<sup>1</sup>*

1 (Herz, 2013)

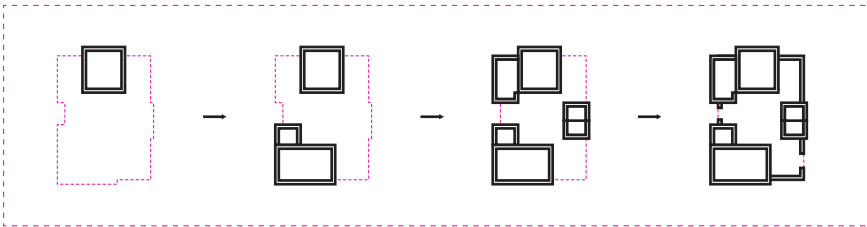


Fig. 1-25 Enclosure of compound. Credit: By author.

2 (Martin, 2015)

At first, the camp seems like a temporary solution with its many tents and pragmatic solutions. Either as a result of residents that still live a life that points to the dream of settling more permanently in a non-determined future or it could be seen as a symbolic function referring to a nomadic culture that could be dismantled and change location with ease.

Nevertheless, if looked at as a variety of architectural structures spanning from light to heavy, with the more permanent constructed units, this opens up a discussion of the agency that potentially could exist under circumstances of exception. An agency that speaks differently than an area overpowered by an emergency but reveals a need for settling and personal impact on a local

3 (Herz, 2013)

context in the making - a notion of normality.<sup>2</sup>

Examples of these kinds of structures as previously introduced, are the more “designed” housing units that spread around the area of the camp. These buildings are a result of people traveling abroad to work and earn money, to then come back and manifest their experiences with cultural differences through architecture and interior design.

By this, the urban fabric is added a sign of further cultural exchange pointing to the liberty of making a mark on one’s dwelling. An act that could be seen as a distancing of a top-down governing planned area and creating a perception of a local culture.<sup>3</sup>



Fig. 1-28 Detailing of permanent structures. Credit: (Herz, 2013, pp 151)

## Commerce & work:

From the establishment of the camps in 1976 under an idealistic agenda, with no monetary system and mostly mutual exchanging as well no privatization of property - to the current situation with their own market economy existing of smaller businesses, markets, official institutions such as hospitals and schools in the mutual interest of the residents - common as well as private initiatives spread all over the campscares.<sup>1</sup>

The materialization of these spaces of commerce differs. A diversity of spatial conditions from single person business' of either brick making, patrol selling or chemist workshops to collective initiatives in the shape of auto shops, butcheries or radio stations.

Some self-employed, others employed by POLISARIO<sup>2</sup>.

1 (Herz, 2013)

2 A rebel national liberation movement by the Sahrawi people.



Fig. 1-29 Signs in the streets.  
Credit: (Herz, 2013, pp 337)



Fig. 1-31 Residents with an advanced agency through community involvement and daily life & work. Credit: (Herz, 2013, pp 335)



Fig. 1-30 Spatial conditions of commerce and work. Credit: (Herz, 2013, pp 252-253)

## Discussion

### How can we learn from the case of the West Saharan refugee camps?

In the case of the El Aaiún refugee camps, we see an advanced agency visualized through different spatial conditions connected to everyday life. This is due to the state of exception that is present, even after almost 50 years of being a refugee camp.

One is the possibility to expand housing units in the scope of community relations. If a resident wants to materialize its need of expansion it is done pragmatically through marking plots in close contact to neighbours or the local barrio<sup>1</sup>. The notion of interchanging negotiation between residents creates a sense of belonging to a community being either temporary or permanent.<sup>2</sup>

### What is neglected in the Danish asylum centre?

Looking at Danish asylum centres where the residents are under circumstances that are for temporary use, in this meaning the waiting position that usually is manifested through what looks like a military barrack. In this position, the refugee has no right of personal impact on spatial expansion - losing their agency over time. Furthermore, the things they are surrounded by are usually restricted to generic inventory/fixtures, which are pre-determined by institutionalized management.<sup>3</sup>

As a space of exception, being excepted

from both departure and arrival societal contexts, being outside of juridical order, the impact of biopower is seen as spaces without a determinable future. As a result of the future being moved/displaced repeatedly between one building after the other that are abandoned structures of previous business' or institutions.<sup>4</sup>

Is this creating a present symbolic value of exclusion from both established communities in Denmark as well as the results, which could be seen as failures, of western modern urbanization?

### What is the political discourse of these spaces of exception in a Danish context in relation to the specific experiences of Babishayini?

*"Employment is a requirement during the stay in Denmark for all adult foreigners, but it is important to keep in mind that employment is not an entry ticket for staying here permanently. It is important that we do not create expectations among refugees. We must send a very clear signal about this ..."*<sup>5</sup>

This seems like political realities that exclude expectations of the asylum seekers on one hand, and an increasing focus on integration into a so-called "common Danish everyday life".

*"But there are parallel societies where foreigners settle in the same residential areas and live in isolation with their own norms and values and without contact with the common Danish everyday life."*<sup>6</sup>

There is some kind of hypocrisy of wanting to create a certain kind of integration in Denmark, that reflects right

4 Such as former hotels or military camps.

1 Sahrawi for "neighbourhood".

2 (Hilal and Petti, 2019, 23, 219)

5 (Inger Støjberg, 2018)

6 (Inger Støjberg, 2018)

3 (Vitus and Smith Nielsen, 2011, 26)



POLITIK

## Tesfaye vil give asylansøgere 20.000 kroner for tidlig hjemrejse

Asylansøgere skal tilbydes 20.000 kroner for at droppe ankesag efter første afslag, foreslår regeringen.



Det tyske folketingsmedlem og Integrationsminister gemmer sig om 200.000 kroner at have én afslået asylansøger indvandet på et hjem eller udflytning (Danmark) (et af: (arkivfoto), via Guldbagge, Jørgen/Photo Scan)

Fig. 1-32 “Tesfaye [Denmark’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and Integration] wants to give asylum seekers DKK 20.000 for leaving home early” News article, Berlingske, 11.08.2020  
<https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/tesfaye-vil-give-asylansoegere-20000-kroner-for-tidlig-hjemrejse>,  
[accessed 12.10.2021]

back to the treatment of asylum seekers isolated from these “Danish” norms and values.

As we learn from the experiences of Babishayini, there are some crucial issues with upholding any sort of close connection to local communities.

Furthermore, the focus on the importance of employment is close to non-existing as the reality of asylum seekers / people applying for a residence permit is restricted especially in the liberty of being employed.<sup>7</sup>

These statements<sup>8</sup> from 2018 and a different government from today, the rhetorics and decision-making are still present. A new repatriation law from 2021 states that immigrants in Denmark

that are rejected on asylum, are categorized side by side with criminals, even though the rejection hasn’t anything to do with criminal actions.

*“Therefore, it is good that we now with this bill get a number of tightenings for rejected asylum seekers and expelled criminals who do not want to go home.”<sup>9</sup>*

In addition, some kind of “bribe” will now be offered for not appealing one’s rejected case.

*“..it is proposed that asylum seekers who have been refused asylum in the first instance, will be offered a cash bonus of DKK 20,000 in one-off contributions to drop their appeal in the Refugee Board and instead travel home.” (Fig. 1-32)<sup>10</sup>*

9 (Rasmus Stoklund, 2018)

7 (Aliens Act, 2019, 421)

8 (Inger Støjberg, 2018)

10 (Rasmus Stoklund, 2018)



5 (Martin, 2015, pp 16)

Would it be possible through the case of El Aaiún refugee camps to define or point to some kind of “state of legal norm / ordinality” or “state of admittance” which could be put in relation to the state of exception as an opposite term, or a state to be developed into from exception?

Even though the spatial conditions of the El Aaiún refugee camps still are influenced by a temporary character, the transition into a more permanent state, being either through architecture or community-based activities, creates a sort of an advanced agency for the residents.

It seems like as the state of exception is defining the camp, a different kind of state in transition is at stake.

If a similar kind of transition from exception into admittance did affect the Danish asylum system in a given future, the waiting time of an asylum seeker could potentially create an advanced sense of belonging.

One thing to point out is the structures of the Danish asylum centres. Usually, either isolated from society, facilitated in abandoned buildings of past activities or with a heavy amount of alienating elements such as metal fences, guarded gates and repetitive planning without a diversifying identity - a lack of potentiality.<sup>4</sup>

4 (Martin, 2015, pp 14)

With a system focusing on governance towards citizenship, there is a lack of understanding of the effect of the governing of securing national belonging.<sup>5</sup>

One could imagine the acceptance of individual rights of settling and potentials of contribution into the equation of the Danish asylum system - such as it is often viewed if the focus was on migration for business purposes - as a humane enhancement.

All these different spatial elements and limitations of agency as asylum seeker are seen in the case of Babishayini - conditions that one should take in consideration when working in the field of migration and the urgency in establishing safe environments and secure future for the individual.

## Conclusion

The spatial consequences of spaces of exception analysed through this written thesis varies from issues on an individual level to more collective levels. In the Danish context of asylum centres, the temporary conditions in abandoned structures stand clear.

Depending on the political demand the capacity of accommodation differs over time.

Some societal consequences of these dynamics are the sensed isolation and the lack of governing of biological life into political life - an exclusive matter of spatial planning. It is important to see these consequences as deeply impacting further into the system of integration.

As for the case of Babishayini, a young immigrant in Denmark, that goes through several years of internal displacement in-between Danish asylum centres, as well as the urgency to escape from Denmark resulting in going to jail.

Her experiences point to the difficulties in handling the individual cases of asylum seekers - how one can be outside of juridical order and the decision-making of the future life to be lived and respected.

With a restrictive political discourse, that depends on a disadvantaged agency of people in the asylum system there is a direct degradation on human rights such as exclusion from working, liberty to live by any relatives, settling in a local community, etc.

Looking at the case of the El Aaiún refugee camp, the state of exception has transitioned into a sort of admittance through especially a sense of ownership connected to private as well as community based life. This e.g. by interchanging spatial extensions materialized through the right to build, commerce and create communities.

The role of the architect is potentially realised through the focus of the dynamics of planning for both temporary and permanent matters.

As spaces of exception often are dominated by a transitory character, a focus on the permanency of living conditions of the future should be of high prioritization.

Important things to point out are the voice of the refugees as individual sensitive cases and to reflect around basic human rights, such as juridical, social or conditioned by spatial standards.

For future planning of asylum centres in Denmark, there is a need for the inclusion of the refugee from day one. Location, sense of ownership, communities and social focus matter.

The systematic issues seem to be excluded from well-known spatial practices, but the potentials of adjustments through interdisciplinary agency point to the difficulties of working with the thematics of migration

### Reflection:

The limitations in access to information and the spaces around the thematics have been a part of this written thesis. One thing is the unfolding of the Danish asylum system with all its complexities. To understand this system, some of its complexities have not been elaborated in the wanted scope due to e.g. prioritisation of other parts of the topic.

Another limitation could be seen in the methods of this written thesis.

The intention was to go and visit some of these spaces of exception, but this first-hand experience has been absent due to e.g. time factors and the present situation of busyness at the Danish asylum centres.

### Future perspectives:

This written thesis is intended to be seen in relation to the future work of architectural interventions through e.g. the thesis project to be worked within the spring of 2022 by the author.

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Folketinget: Møde 31 referat, Onsdag den 5. december 2018 kl. 10.00

Forespørgsel nr. F 19:

Forespørgsel til udlændinge- og integrationsministeren:

Vil regeringen redegøre for, hvordan det i et historisk perspektiv er gået med integrationen af personer, der strømmer til fra de muslimske lande, hvad status er på integrationen af denne befolkningsgruppe set i forhold til indvandrere fra øvrige lande, og hvad regeringens ambitioner og mål er for den muslimske befolkningsgruppe i Danmark?

Af Marie Krarup (DF) og Martin Henriksen (DF).

(Anmeldelse 08.11.2018. Fremme 13.11.2018).

Besvarelse af Udlændinge- og integrationsministeren Inger Støjberg

(Rasmus Stoklund, 2018)

Folketinget: Møde 90 referat, Torsdag den 8. april 2021 kl. 10.00

6) 1. behandling af lovforslag nr. L 203:

Forslag til lov om hjemrejse for udlændinge uden lovligt ophold (hjemrejseloven).

Af udlændinge- og integrationsministeren (Mattias Tesfaye).

(Fremsættelse 26.03.2021).

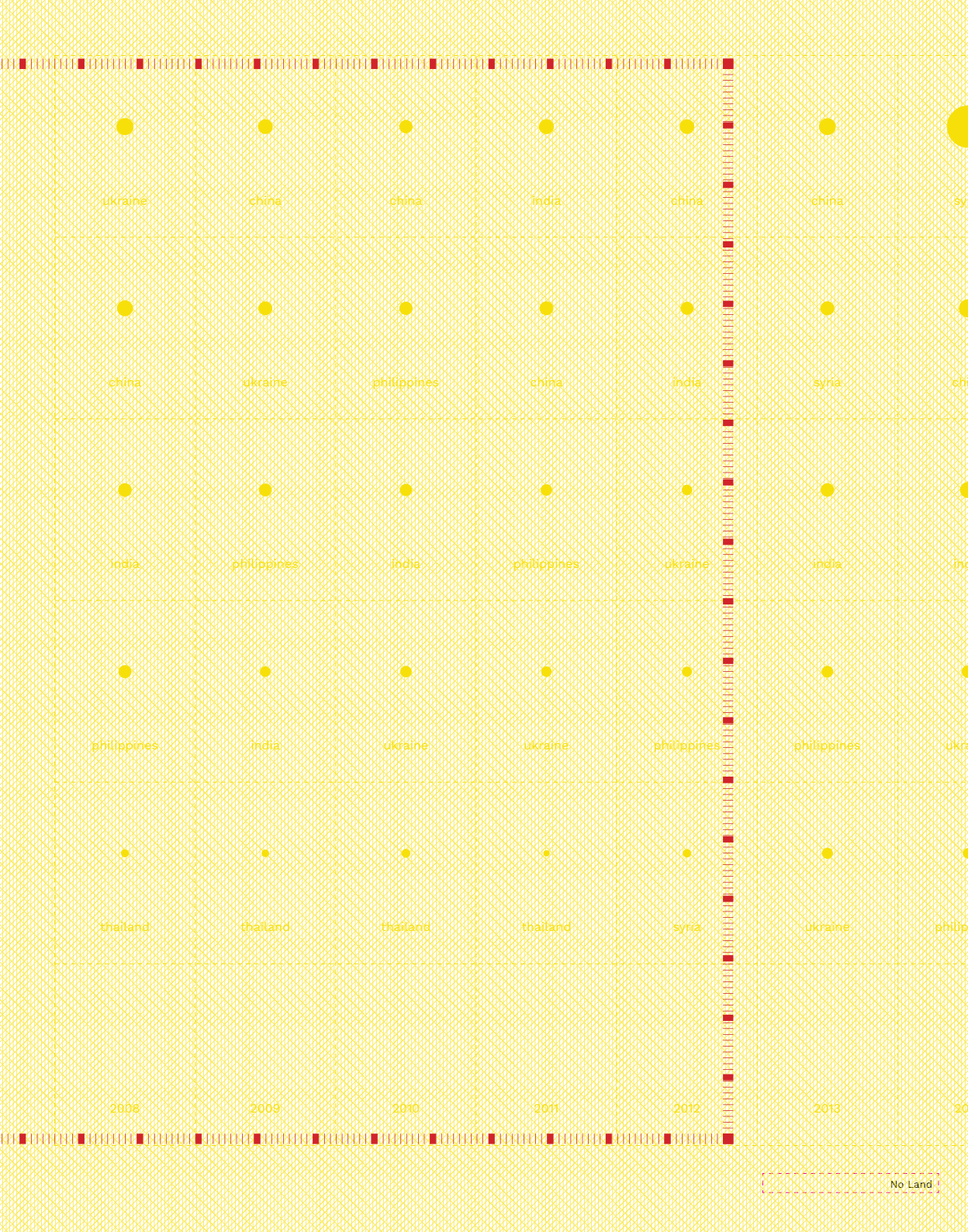
Besvarelse af Udlændinge- og integrationsordfører, Rasmus Stoklund

# List of Figures

Fig. 1-1	Timeline of the Danish asylum system, 1996-2020. Credit: By author, data from Ministry of Immigration and Integration	07
Fig. 1-2	A so-called “refugee crisis”. Credit: By author	08
Fig. 1-3	Credit: Jacob Lawrence, “A Photographer”, 1942	13
Fig. 1-4	Room at Asylum centre, Middelfart. Credit: (Juhl, 2004, pp 39)	14
Fig. 1-5	Credit: By author	15
Fig. 1-6	Which authorities handle which case? Credit: By author + data from (Tal og fakta på udlændingeområdet, 2020)	17
Fig. 1-7	The statistics of applying for a residence permit from 2016-2020. Credit: By author + data from (Tal og fakta på udlændingeområdet, 2020)	17
Fig. 1-8	Placement of asylum centres in Denmark over time. y = year, c = centres. Credit: By author	18
Fig. 1-9	Steps of the asylum process in Denmark. Credit: By author	19
Fig. 1-10	Aliens (Consolidation) Act (No. 239 of 10 March 2019). Credit: Ministry of Immigration and Integration	21
Fig. 1-11	Emergency exit, Randers Barracks. Credit: (Juhl, 2004, pp 23)	22
Fig. 1-12	Credit: By author	23
Fig. 1-13	Geographic overview of areas of interest in case studies 2 & 3. Credit: By author	25
Fig. 1-14	Step by step diagram of typologies along Babishayinis asylum process. Credit: By author	26
Fig. 1-15	Entrance of Sjælsmark Asylum Centre; former military camp. Credit: Google Street View + by author	27
Fig. 1-16	Entrance to Gribskov asylum centre, at the end of a long narrow road surrounded by trees. Credit: Google Street View + by author	28
Fig. 1-17	Entrance to the former Kongelunden asylum centre. Credit: Google Street View + by author	29
Fig. 1-18	Entrance at Sandholm asylum centre. Credit: Google Street View + by author	31
Fig. 1-19	Overlooking daïra (district) El Guelta in El Aaiún. Credit: (Herz, 2013, pp 22-23)	32



Fig. 1-20	Credit: By author	33
Fig. 1-21	Diagram of urban fabric development. Credit: (Herz, 2013, pp 96)	34
Fig. 1-22	Housing typologies. Credit: By author	35
Fig. 1-23	Hand-made bricks in metal molds. Credit: By Author	35
Fig. 1-24	Expansion of housing units. Credit: By author.	35
Fig. 1-27	Interior furnishing. Credit: By author	36
Fig. 1-25	Enclosure of compound. Credit: By author.	36
Fig. 1-26	Decorating interior spaces. Credit: (Herz, 2013, pp 149)	36
Fig. 1-28	Detailing of permanent structures. Credit: (Herz, 2013, pp 151)	37
Fig. 1-29	Signs in the streets. Credit: (Herz, 2013, pp 337)	38
Fig. 1-31	Residents with an advanced agency through community involvement and daily life & work. Credit: (Herz, 2013, pp 335)	39
Fig. 1-30	Spatial conditions of commerce and work. Credit: (Herz, 2013, pp 252-253)	39
Fig. 1-32	“Tesfaye [Denmark’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and Integration] wants to give asylum seekers DKK 20.000 for leaving home early” News article, Berlingske, 11.08.2020 <a href="https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/tesfaye-vil-give-asylansoegere-20000-kroner-for-tidlig-hjemrejse">https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/tesfaye-vil-give-asylansoegere-20000-kroner-for-tidlig-hjemrejse</a> , [accessed 12.10.2021]	41



No Land